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Outline Of Reference Paper On:

SOVIET COLONIALISM AT HOME AND ABROAD

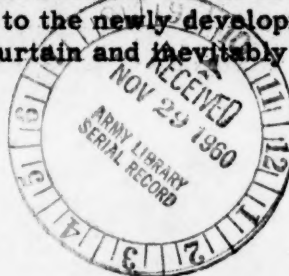
While the Soviet propagandists excel each other in denouncing Western colonialism, their own government is beset with problems associated with a colonial regime.

One of the most telling ways in which the various nationalities of the USSR have tried to assert independence in their respective republics is autarky, or the creation of a closed economy within a given ethnic area.

That the Kremlin considers local economic independence a threat to the welfare of the state was emphasized by the wholesale dismissals of Party officials in three Soviet republics.

An important measure in the Soviet endeavors to suppress national-liberation movements is Russification, or the assimilation of the individual nationalities through the use of the Russian language and through the implantation of Russian culture.

The vulnerability of the Soviet regime to exposures of its colonial policy is illustrated by the reactions of Soviet government officials and of the press. Not only do these exposures give second thoughts to the newly developing nations but they also percolate through the Iron Curtain and inevitably reach the ear of the nationalities concerned.



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SOVIET COLONIALISM AT HOME AND ABROAD

While the Soviet propagandists are hammering at what they call imperialist colonialism, the Kremlin itself is jarred by national-liberation movements in some of the Soviet republics. Such activity against Soviet colonialism usually takes the form of endeavors to achieve local autarky -- to produce goods only for the benefit of the republic concerned. Efforts toward local economic independence are to some extent encouraged even by persons of prominence in the Party and government in the various republics. Central Committee Secretary Nuritdin A. Mukhitdinov issued a warning against this type of local nationalism at the Twenty-First Party Congress at the beginning of 1959:

A constant struggle must be waged against vestiges of nationalism and chauvinism which manifest themselves mainly in emphasis on local interests and lead... in some persons to harmful attitudes aimed at placing narrow national interests above state interests (Pravda, January 31, 1959).

Mukhitdinov openly warned the heads of the national republics that

the tendency to create a closed economy in the republics, to strive for autarky, is harmful and dangerous both for the interests of the country and for each nation (Ibid.).

Mukhitdinov admitted that some republics were striving for freedom in other fields, too:

National narrowness makes itself felt here and there in the spheres of literature, art, and in the study of history. In spite of objective truth, individuals idealize the feudal past, regard the national cultural heritage from the standpoint of anti-Marxist theory (Ibid.).

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Even more outspoken about the existence of national sentiments in the Soviet republics was Bobodzhan G. Gafurov, a theoretician on problems of relations among the nationalities:

One may well ask why nationalistic tendencies manifest themselves even now in a socialist society, in which classes have been destroyed, in which friendly relations exist between the workers of all nationalities. The point is that these vestiges of nationalism are extremely harmful and tenacious in people's consciousness.... Their existence shows that we must step up the training of workers in the spirit of internationalism (Voprosy Stroitelstva Kommunizma V SSSR, Problems of the Building of Communism in the USSR, Moscow, 1959).

Gafurov's remarks are significant because they form part of a report read at a conference of leading Soviet theoreticians, who had met to discuss the shape of the Communist society of the future.

Further examples of the Party Central Committee struggle against emphasis on local national interests are the dismissals in 1959 of the First Secretaries of the Latvian, Azerbaijanian, and Uzbek Communist Parties, who were accused of winking at nationalism. Numerous other officials in the Party and administration were also kicked out. In a number of republics there was a full-scale purge of the national intelligentsia and of persons prominent in literature and the arts. In some republics, especially the Baltic states, representatives of the youth organizations were persecuted.

An important measure in the Soviet drive to create a "single socialist nation" is Russification, or assimilation of the individual nationalities through the use of the Russian language and through the implantation of Russian culture:

Of great importance for the peoples of our country is a profound mastery of the Russian language, a mastery of the rich achievements of Russian culture... The Russian language is the most powerful means of contact between the peoples of the Soviet Union: thanks to it, the achievements of the Russian people in science, technology and culture become the possession of all the peoples of the country... (Voprosy Stroitelstva Kommunizma V SSSR, Moscow, 1959).

In a recent number of the Party theoretical organ Kommunist, the head of the Central Committee Department for Propaganda and Agitation, Leonid F. Ilchev, warned that

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We must be on the watch in the future, too, remembering that vestiges of nationalism are the most tenacious relics of the past and that they usually manifest themselves in the most subtle and disguised forms. We must rip the mask from nationalism, which is foreign to us, whatever its devices may be, pull the ground from under the... nationalistic elements, which often thrive on such... terms as "national characteristic," "national form of culture," and so on. Under the banner of such concepts the attempt is often made to perpetuate and legalize relics of the past. We must not make a fetish of national characteristics (No. 14, 1960).

One of the main complaints of the non-Russian republics is that their local industrial and agricultural products are exported to other parts of the country and do not benefit the republics concerned. Secretary of the Azerbaijanian Party Central Committee N. Gadzhiev was compelled, in an article in Izvestia of November 2, 1960, to advise propagandists not to "plug" the rich natural resources of individual republics, what they produce and what they export, but to stress the benefits that each republic receives from the others.

In its campaign to gain the sympathy of the non-Communist countries of Asia and Africa, the Kremlin makes much ado with claims of close friendship between the peoples of the USSR. The Soviets use the national intelligentsia, at their disposal, to arrange numerous international assemblies, visits, and conferences to win the new countries. A typical affair of this kind was the First Soviet Conference for the Solidarity of the Afro-Asian Peoples, which was held in October, 1960, in Stalinabad, Tadzhikistan.

Soviet nationality policy, then, has two markedly different aspects. Inside the USSR and the Communist bloc the Soviets pursue a policy of complete colonialism, while abroad the Kremlin proclaims its support of the anti-colonial struggle and rails at the horrors of colonialism. That this dual colonial policy is a tender spot was well illustrated by Soviet Premier Khrushchev's outbursts at the United Nations. What caused Khrushchev on October 12 to lose his temper was a resolution of the Philippine Delegate Lorenzo Suvulong on colonialism and the peoples of the Soviet empire.

A further example of Soviet touchiness in this matter was the campaign launched in response to a speech of Canadian Prime Minister Diefenbaker at the United Nations. The Soviet press attacked him, in the name of the "insulted Ukrainian people" for suggesting that they were oppressed by the Soviets. Obviously, any reference to Soviet colonialism is extremely embarrassing to the Kremlin, as rumors do reach the people in the Communist states. On October 2, U.S. Under-Secretary of State Dillon called attention in Chicago to the colonial yoke in the USSR. He mentioned that the Baltic states had been seized by force and that only 30 per cent of the native Kazakh population was now living in Kazakhstan. Twenty days later, on October 28, Pravda was called upon to explain to the Soviet people just why only 30 per cent of the native Kazakh population lives in Kazakhstan and just what benefits the Communists had brought the Baltic republics. The delayed Soviet reply suggests that it was intended to counter echoes from Dillon's speech among the Soviet population.

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